

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A content usage control system which controls the usage of content supplied by an authorized information supplier including a content producer who is also the information producer and those persons authorized by the information producer, said system comprising:

a user unit which enables the user to use the content;

a setting unit which sets a license as a structure expressed by a combination of logic sums and logic products of a plurality of partial licenses for the content based on the ID information of the physical elements of said user unit including the media used in said user unit and the ID information of the user; and

a usage control unit which controls the usage of the content by said user unit based on the license set by said setting unit.

2. The content usage control system according to claim 1, wherein the partial licenses set by said setting unit include the accounting condition constituting the condition for a category changing with the usage state of said user unit and the user.

3. The content usage control system according to claim 1,
in which said usage control unit includes a unit for producing,
at the request of the user unit to use the content, the license
information encrypted from the license and the content decode
5 key by the ID information of a plurality of physical elements
of said user unit including the media used in said user unit,

in which said user unit decodes the license information
sent in accordance with the content usage request, based on the
ID information of the physical elements due to said user unit,
10 and in the case where the license conditions are satisfied, the
encrypted content are decoded by use of the content decode key.

4. The content usage control system according to claim 3,
wherein said production unit encrypts by multiplexing the ID
15 information of the physical elements corresponding to the
partial licenses of the license in the case where the interface
~~of the partial licenses is described by the logic product.~~

5. The content usage control system according to claim 1,
wherein the physical elements include those included in other
physical elements.

6. The content usage control system according to claim 1,
further comprising a content server which holds the content
25 encrypted by the authorized information supplier unit on an open

network, and sends the encrypted content to said user unit upon receipt of a request to distribute the content from said user unit.

5 7. A content usage control system which controls the usage of the content supplied by the authorized information supplier including a content producer who is also the information producer and the persons authorized by the information producer, said system comprising:

10 a user unit which requests the usage of the content, and decoding the encrypted content using the content decode key in the case of satisfying the license conditions obtained by decoding the license request sent in accordance with the content usage request, based on the ID information of the physical elements of the user unit;

15 a setting unit which sets a license expressed as a structure by a combination of logic sums and logic products of a plurality of partial licenses for the content based on the ID information for the physical elements of said user unit including the media used in said user unit and the ID information for the user;

20 a conditions storage unit which stores the license conditions set by said setting unit;

a holding unit which holds said content decode key;

25 ~~an extraction unit which receives the content usage~~

request from said user unit and extracts the license conditions and said content decode key corresponding to said user unit; and

a production unit which produces the license information by encrypting the license conditions and said content decode key based on the ID information of the physical elements sent from said user unit and sends the license information to said user unit.

8. A content usage apparatus connected to a network for enabling the user to use the content, said apparatus comprising:

a request unit which transmits an ID information of the physical elements of said content usage apparatus and an ID information of the user to an external content management apparatus which manages the content in response to a content usage request;

a unit which decodes the license information transmitted by said content management apparatus, using the ID information of the physical element of said content usage apparatus in response to the content usage request, and determines the license conditions and the content decode key; and

a unit which decodes the content using the decode key when permitted upon determination of the license obtained.

9. A computer readable recording medium which stores a program executed by the computer of the content usage apparatus connected to a network for enabling the user to use the content, said program being intended to perform the operations
5 comprising the steps of:

transmitting an ID information of the physical elements of said content usage apparatus and an ID information of the user to an external content management apparatus which manages the content in accordance with a content usage request;

10 determining the license conditions and content decode key by decoding the license information transmitted by said content management apparatus in response to the content usage request, using the ID information of the physical elements of said content usage apparatus; and

15 decoding the content using the decode key when permitted upon determination of the license conditions.

10. A content usage apparatus enabling the user to use the content, said apparatus comprising:

20 a unit which determines a license conditions and a content decode key by decoding a license information for the content based on an ID information of the physical elements of said content usage apparatus in response to the content usage request; and

25 ~~a unit which decodes the content by use of the decode key~~

when permitted upon determination of the license conditions determined.

11. A computer readable recording medium which stores a program executed by the computer of the content usage apparatus for enabling the user to perform the operations comprising the steps of:

determining license conditions and a content decode key by decoding the license information of the content based on an ID information of the physical elements of said content usage apparatus in response to the content usage request; and

decoding the content using the decode key when permitted upon determination of the license conditions.